

Message Text

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PAGE 01 PARAMA 00521 131345Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 ICAE-00
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FM AMEMBASSY PARAMARIBO
TO SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 4229
INFO AMEMBASSY GEORGETOWN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY BRAZILIA PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PORT OF SPAIN PRIORITY
AMCONSUL MARTINIQUE PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY
AMEMBASSY CARACAS
AMEMBASSY THE HAGUE

C O N F I D E N T I A L PARAMARIBO 521

C O R R E C T E D C O P Y (PARA 2 AND PARA 5)

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR PBOR EFIS NS GY
SUBJ: SURINAM-GUYANA RELATIONS DETERIORATING

1. GUYANA'S AMBASSADOR TO SURINAM SYDNEY SAUL
RETURNED TO PARAMARIBO APRIL 9 FROM HIS SUDDEN CONSULTATIONS
IN GEORGETOWN WITH INSTRUCTIONS TO PRESENT A STRONG
PROTEST NOTE TO THE SURINAM GOVERNMENT (GOS) OVER RECENT
INCIDENTS INVOLVING GUYANESE IN SURINAM. SAUL DELIVERED THAT
NOTE PERSONALLY TO PRIME MINISTER ARRON MORNING OF APRIL
12, AND GUYANESE EMBASSY IS NOW AWAITING GOS REPLY.

2. AS DESCRIBED BY GUYANESE EMBASSY SOURCE, NOTE MAKES
REFERENCE TO MARCH INCIDENTS INVOLVING GUYANESE BALATA
WORKERS CAUGHT IN SURINAM'S INTERIOR AND "HARASSMENT" OF
GUYANESE FISHERMEN ALONG THE CORANTIJN RIVER, AND ASSERTS
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GUYANA'S RIGHT TO USE CORANTIJN RIVER BASED ON EARLIER
AGREEMENTS BETWEEN THE UK AND THE NETHERLANDS. ALTHOUGH
CLAIMING THAT GUYANESE GOVERNMENT (GOG) WANTS TO HAVE FRIENDLY
RELATIONS WITH SURINAM AND TO CONTINUE DISCUSSIONS OVER
OUTSTANDING ISSUES BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES, NOTE REPORTEDLY
ALSO REQUIRES SURINAMERS TO GO TO GEORGETOWN IF TALKS BEGUN
BE FORMER GUYANESE FOREIGN MINISTER WILLS IN EARLY FEBRUARY

ARE TO BE RESUMED. GUYANESE PROTEST ALSO TIES INCIDENTS OF LAST SEVERAL MONTHS TO OVERALL BORDER DISPUTE WHICH EXISTS WITH SURINAM OVER THE UPPER CORANTIJN RIVER AREA.

3. ACCORDING TO GUYANESE EMBASSY SOURCE, NOTE IS VERY STRONG, USING FOR EXAMPLE PHRASES TO THE EFFECT THAT GUYANA WILL USE ALL AVAILABLE RESOURCES TO RESIT SUCH INFRINGEMENT ON ITS RIGHTS BY SURINAM. SAME SOURCE FEARS THAT MORE DIFFICULT TIMES ARE AHEAD AND WORRIED ALOUD WHETHER SOME OF THE HARD-LINERS IN GEORGETOWN WERE NOT INTERESTED IN CREATING INCIDENTS TO DIVERT ATTENTION FROM GUYANA'S SERIOUS INTERNAL PROBLEMS, OBSERVING THAT SHOULD MATTERS BECOME SO BAD THAT WAR RESULTED, THOSE WHO WOULD HAVE TO BEAR THE BRUNT OF THE SUFFERING WOULD BE THE EAST INDIAN SUPPORTS OF CHEDDI JAGAN'S PPP WHO LIVE IN EASTERN GUYANA. SOURCE POINTED OUT ADDITIONALLY THAT LATEST DEVELOPMENTS CAME ABOUT AFTER CIRCULATION OF A POLICY PAPER ON RELATIONS WITH SURINAM WHICH REACHED THE HIGHEST LEVELS OF THE GOG WITHOUT AN INPUT FROM GUYANA'S EMBASSY IN SURINAM WHOSE COMMENTS ARRIVED AFTER ALL THE IMPORTANT DECISIONS HAD BEEN MADE.

4. GUYANESE EMBOFF, WHO SAT IN ON MEETING BETWEEN SAUL AND ARRON AT WHICH SAUL PRESENTED PROTEST NOTE, SAID THAT ARRON REACTED CALMLY (EMBOFF SAID THAT IF PRIME MINISTER BURNHAM HAD BEEN PRESENTED WITH A NOTE OF THE TONE GIVEN ARRON, HE WOULD PROBABLY HAVE REJECTED IT OUT OF HAND), COMMENTING THAT CONFIDENTIAL

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MANY OF THE ISSUES RAISED IN THE NOTE HAD BEEN SETTLED DURING THE FEBRUARY WILLS' VISIT AND THAT THE GOS IS STILL AWAITING A REPLY FROM THE GOG ON THOSE TALKS. ARRON ALSO ASKED FOR SPECIFICS ON SOME OF THE INCIDENTS CITED IN THE NOTE, WHICH SAUL WAS UNABLE TO PROVIDE BECAUSE NO OFFICIAL REPORT, FOR EXAMPLE, ON THE BALATA WORKERS' AFFAIRS, EXISTS.

5. COMMENT: EMBASSY IS NOT ABLE TO PREDICT WITH ANY CERTAINTY LIKELY GOS REACTION, BUT WE FIND IT DIFFICULT TO IMAGINE THAT GOS WILL BE FORTHCOMING AFTER HAVING BEEN PRESENTED WITH WHAT AMOUNTS TO AN ULTIMATIUM IN ALL BUT HAVING A SPECIFIC DEADLINE ATTACHED TO IT. RELATIONS WITH GUYANA IN GENERAL AND BORDER ISSUE IN PARTICULAR ARE SENSITIVE EVEN IN THE BEST OF TIMES AND EVIDENCE OF GUYANESE PRESSURE COULD EASILY GIVE HARDLINERS IN GOS THE OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN ANTI-GUYANA ATTITUDES. WE ARE NOT YET AT THE POINT WHERE WE WOULD SAY THAT RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO COUNTRIES ARE ABOUT TO BREAK DOWN COMPLETELY, BUT WE NOTE WITH CONCERN THE FEELING OF FRUSTRATION AND FAILURE WHICH CHARACTERIZED GUYANESE EMBOFF'S PRESENTATION OF CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES AND HIS LESS-THAN-JOKING WONDERING WHETHER HE SHOULD BEGIN TO PACK HIS BELONGINGS.

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